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DEPARTMENT FOR G/IWI, IO/SHA and DRL/PHD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [CSW](#) [ICAO](#)

SUBJECT: International Women's Day - Event at ICAO in Montreal

REF: State 047117

[1](#)1. Summary: On Monday, March 8, Consul General (CG) Bernadette Allen joined Lieutenant Governor Lise Thibault and Transport Canada Assistant Deputy Minister for Policy Kristine Burr in addressing the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) ambassadors, delegates and staff and other invited guests at the celebration of International Women's Day. Lt. Gov. Thibault is the highest ranking woman dignitary in Quebec and the first woman ever to hold her office. Both CG Allen and Thibault highlighted steps needed to further improve the advancement of women. ICAO Secretary General Cherif and ICAO Council President Kotaite

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also gave brief remarks. Vice Consul Heidi Arola, post's Federal Women's Program Coordinator, accompanied the CG and served as notetaker for the event. End summary.

[1](#)2. CG Allen's Comments: Speaking to an audience of a few hundred ICAO delegates and staff members, CG Allen's remarks drew on her experiences as an African-American woman and daughter of a single mother as well as the inspiration she has received from various women role models. And, given the ICAO audience, Allen made special mention of the achievements of women aviators and astronauts, including Amelia Earhart, Canadian pilot Deanna Brasseur, Russian cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, Canadian astronaut Julie Payette, and Americans Mae Jamison, and Kalpana Chawla. She specifically highlighted the accomplishments of Bessie Coleman, the first licensed Black woman pilot who moved to France and earned her pilot's license in 1921. Allen emphasized that access to education is the key to opening political and economic doors for women and noted that education reduces the risks that women and girls face, such as sexual exploitation, HIV-AIDS, infant mortality, and poverty.

[1](#)3. Though the program moderator, ICAO Recruitment Officer Diana Wall, stated in introductory remarks that 56 percent of ICAO staff members are women, Secretary General Cherif ruefully pointed out that most of the positions held by women are administrative/clerical and that women hold only one-fourth of the "professional" positions in ICAO. Lt. Gov. Thibault spoke of the struggles that women face today, trying to balance their home lives and professional lives. She noted that while it used to be only men who had heart attacks in their 50s, more and more women are meeting the same fate. She emphasized that women need to start changing their speech patterns; instead of saying "my children, my laundry, my house," they need to say "our children, our laundry, our house." According to Thibault, women "cannot do and be everything," they need assistance in order to maintain their dignity, values, and souls.

[1](#)4. The ICAO Staff Association presented carnations to all women who attended the event and sponsored a champagne reception afterwards. Many well-wishers complimented the CG's remarks and expressed appreciation for U.S. participation.

ALLEN